

What is School Readiness?

Children entering school for the first time bring with them a unique set of skills and behaviors based on personal characteristics and experiences. Thus, school readiness is different for every child. Although school readiness is often viewed from the Ready Child perspective, school readiness is much more complex and is affected by the interplay of multiple factors during the child's early years.

MISSOURI'S SCHOOL READINESS DEFINITION

Although school readiness is defined differently by programs, states, and the federal government; there is general agreement on readiness including certain aspects of child, family, community, services and schools.

- For **children**, school readiness is being prepared in key dimensions of early learning and development (social and emotional, language and literacy, cognitive, motor, health and physical well-being, and positive attitudes and behaviors toward learning).
- For **families**, school readiness is providing a safe environment for children to grow and learn, and an understanding of their children's current health and development.
- For **communities**, school readiness is providing families with access to community resources and valuing the critical role of early learning.
- For **early care & education (ECE) services**, school readiness is having a variety of services available to all families in the community and providing services based on the families' needs.
- For **schools**, school readiness is providing a welcoming and accepting environment for all children, and having educators who consistently advance student growth and achievement while working in partnership with families.

RATIONALE FOR SCHOOL READINESS INDICATORS ¹

Developing statewide school readiness indicators allows policymakers to track and monitor progress across the state, supports collaboration among agencies serving young children and their families, and assists stakeholders in understanding their roles and responsibilities in supporting school readiness.

Recognizing the importance of early experiences is not enough, there must be measureable indicators that enable ECE programs and elementary schools to assess a child's abilities, track progress and inform policy.

READY CHILDREN

Each child enters school with a unique set of characteristics and experiences, as reflected in their current skills and behaviors. Assessing the development of all children from birth to school entry allows families and community agencies to identify concerns and to provide additional supports to be responsive to the child's needs.

Child indicators should include measures for developmental and/or health screenings and a school readiness assessment.



READY FAMILIES

Family readiness is an essential component in helping children be successful in school. Family readiness includes their ability to access community resources that support a safe and healthy environment. Parent and family characteristics can also affect the family's readiness for their child to enter school.

Family indicators should include measures for children and families living in poverty, child exposure to trauma, abuse or neglect, access to health care, maternal education, maternal depression, and maternal age.

READY COMMUNITIES

Ready communities support families and enhance their ability to support the healthy development of their children. Ready communities provide opportunities and resources to all members of the community and promote school readiness for all young children.

Community Indicators should include measures for access to affordable housing, homelessness, community economic well-being, and health care access.

READY SERVICES

Services that provide for the safety, health, and education of children and families and are essential for school readiness.

Service indicators should include measures for availability of community-based early childhood programs, the quality of the available programs, the numbers of children whose families receive a childcare subsidy, and the thoroughness of child find as mandated in the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

READY SCHOOLS

Ready schools provide families and children with the educational, physical and mental health supports they need to be successful. Ready schools include administrators, teachers, and other professionals who understand that children come to school with a range of readiness skills and are prepared to provide high quality educational programs for all children including English Language Learners, children with disabilities, children living in poverty, and children with behavioral challenges.

School indicators should include the presence of district policies for transitioning to kindergarten; availability of universal pre-kindergarten programs; participation rate for special education and early intervention programs; use of evidence-based curricula; requirements for staff development; and the use of developmentally appropriate practices, including scaffolding the learning of all children and respecting the diversity of families.

¹ Source of rationale is the *Getting Ready Findings from the National School Readiness Initiative*, available online at: <https://www.aecf.org/resources/getting-ready/>. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official positions of DHHS, ACF, DESE, the University of Missouri, or any other partners or funding sources.

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